

Latimer, Becky

From: Katherine Mullaugh
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 4:21 PM
To: PSC_Contact
Subject: [External] Letter objecting to Dominion's proposal
Attachments: PSC letter Dominion net metering March 2021.pdf

A PDF of my statement is also attached.

March 22, 2021

To the members of the South Carolina Public Service Commission:

My name is Katherine Mullaugh and I am a resident of South Carolina (McEnery Alley, Charleston) and a customer of Dominion Energy South Carolina. I am writing in strong opposition to the changes proposed by Dominion regarding the net metering program. My husband and I purchased and installed solar panels on our roof in early 2018. We took advantage of the generous federal and state tax credits that made this large upfront cost financially feasible for our family. We took in good faith the net-metering offered to us initially would be available throughout the lifetime of our investment, and found our rooftop solar panels would effectively pay for themselves long before their warranties expired. Dominion would likely point out that as early solar adopters we would be partially grandfathered into the previous net metering program, but I write with broader concerns than the financial impact on my family's energy bills.

Our solar panels are a tremendous point of pride for my family because we thrive to lead lives that minimize our environmental impact. Our solar panels are great conversation starters with our friends and neighbors, and several have followed our lead in installing their own, initially attracted by the consumer freedom and cost benefit, but also motivated by reducing a major source of greenhouse gases and air pollution. I also use our solar panels as a teaching tool in my environmental chemistry classes at the College of Charleston where we discuss how they work as an alternative to inefficient combustion-based sources of electricity. If not for our solar panels, our household energy use would have emitted thousands of pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂), not to mention other harmful emissions like particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide (CO) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x). These pollutants contribute to higher rates of asthma, lung disease and heart disease, which in turn raises health care costs for all of us.

While Dominion will try to characterize the existence of net metering as an added expense to them and their non-solar customers, this is short-sighted and inaccurate. Keep in mind Dominion operates effectively as a monopoly in their service area. It's not like Dominion customers can go out and shop around for different electricity providers. Considering these obvious business advantages, I do not accept Dominion's claim that my energy independence somehow makes me obligated to pay them more fees or somehow causes non-solar customers to pay more. I also grow food in my own garden, but I don't need to pay the grocery store to make up the difference for the produce that I no longer need to buy, and other grocery customers do not pay more as a result of my garden. The store simply adjusts its inventory to a lower consumer demand.

We often hear a lot of angst about the cost of addressing climate change, but we rarely address what it costs if we do not make the necessary changes to our energy system. By shifting away from nonrenewable, dirty

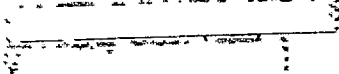
sources of energy Dominion wants us wedded to, we will see immediate benefits in air and water quality. By giving South Carolinians the choice to opt out of carbon-emitting, pollution-causing non-renewable forms of energy, we keep our air just a little bit cleaner. That is a benefit shared by all of us, not just those of us privileged enough to be able to afford rooftop solar panels, and not just Dominion's customers. Because lower-income, minority and otherwise marginalized communities are often adjacent to pollution-causing power plants, lowering our reliance as a whole on these outdated forms of electricity help us move toward a more equitable society.

Finally, I would like to close my statement by reminding the South Carolina Public Service Commission that they work for us, the people of South Carolina. And if there is one thing I know about South Carolinians, it's that they don't like to have choice taken away from them. The proposal by Dominion to change the net-metering program would add extra costs to individuals seeking for a more sustainable and equitable future in South Carolina.

Thank you for hearing my comments and listening to my concerns. I will be available by phone at the number provided below should you need to contact me or get further comment.

Sincerely

Katherine M. Mullaugh, Ph.D.


Charleston, SC 